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DE RUEHNR #1680 1091049
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 191049Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1078
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS NAIROBI 001680

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DEPT FOR AF/E AND EB/TRA/OTP
DEPT FOR AF/EPS C TRIMBLE
DEPT ALSO PASS TO DOT FOR CONNIE HUNTER

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: EAIR EAID ECON KE
SUBJECT: SAFE SKIES FOR AFRICA REVIEW

REF: State 51152

¶1. Safe Skies for Africa (SSFA) is one of the most valuable programs the USG and the Embassy are engaged in with the Government of Kenya (GOK). Under SSFA, we work closely with Kenyan civil aviation officials to enhance the safety and security of air travelers in Kenya. Our goal is to assist the Kenya Civil Aviation Administration (KCAA) and the Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) meet the globally recognized air safety and security standards established by the ICAO, and achieve Category One status. This increases the safety and security of the thousands of AmCits and many USG officials who use Jomo Kenyatta International and Moi International airports.

¶2. Achieving Category One status would pave the way for direct flights and code shares to the U.S., boosting two-way trade, and in particular promoting growth in Kenya's tourism industry, which is now the second largest earner of foreign exchange for Kenya, and a major source of investment and employment. Kenyan officials recognize that an aviation accident or another terrorist attack would cause a severe drop in tourism earnings and thus lead to slower economic growth.

¶3. SSFA is also supporting the initiative of the leaders of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to strengthen regional integration through the East Africa Community (EAC). DOT and the FAA are working with the EAC nations to develop the first regional aviation safety oversight body in Africa, responsible for regional aviation security cooperation, crisis management, accident investigations and air navigation organizations. We anticipate the launch by the end of June 2006.

¶4. Under "Safe Skies," over 160 Kenyan aviation managers and personnel have received in-depth training over the past two years. Since 2001, the U.S. has provided in excess of \$3 million of assistance to Kenya to upgrade its air safety and security institutions and infrastructure.

¶5. Kenyan aviation and security officials deeply appreciate the SSFA program. SSFA has given the Embassy excellent relations with and access to all aviation officials and the industry, especially in security, which is vital as long as Kenya is rated as facing a critical threat for terrorism. Unfortunately, the GOK's refusal to sign an Article 98 Agreement has barred FY '06 and '07 ESF assistance that funds SSFA programs. Unless the USG provides a Nethercutt amendment waiver for SSFA, DOT will likely exhaust funding available for Kenya sometime in FY '07. Although Kenyan aviation officials appreciate SSFA, the threat of losing SSFA programs in Kenya is unlikely to provide the sufficient leverage needed to push Kenya to sign an Article

98 Agreement, especially with a national election looming
in December 2007.

BELLAMY